

Rear Admiral Barry C. Black Farewell Speech

A Great Ride

1. Honorable Johnson (Acting Secretary of the Navy) Admiral Clark (Chief of Naval Operations), General Hagee (Commandant of the United States Marine Corps), Admiral Collins (Commandant of the United States Coast Guard),
2. Admiral Fallon (Vice Chief of Naval Operations), Admiral Hoewing (Chief of Naval Personnel),
3. General Gunhus (Army Chief of Chaplains), General Potter (Air Force Chief of Chaplains),
4. and Master Chief Scott (Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy), honored guests—Thank you for your presence today.
5. Several years ago I owned a green Mercedes. It was very old, vintage, and one of the finest vehicles I have driven. Every time I entered that automobile, I knew I would have a great ride. That car evokes powerful memories—spiritual memories because I planned many a sermon in that car; relational memories because I enjoyed the company of many colleagues in that car; and familial memories because our family logged many miles in that car.
6. By analogy, my sojourn in the Navy has been a great ride filled with spiritual memories, relational memories, and familial memories.
7. As the Chief of Chaplains these last three years, I have been afforded the opportunity to see Chaplain Corps ministry at every level. It has been an incredible experience.

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8. I have eradicated stereotypes in my own mind regarding other faith traditions. In serving alongside with other clergy, I have found an extraordinary depth of spirituality, commitment and honor.
9. I pray God that I have eradicated stereotypes in the minds of others regarding my faith tradition and my ethnic heritage.
10. I shall take along with me the spiritual memory of our weekly staff devotions, where we prayed for the safety of our men and women in the Sea Services, our local community, our chaplains, and Religious Program Specialists.
11. Logging thousands of miles during my tenure as Deputy Chief of Chaplains and Chief of Chaplains, I shall take with me the memories of the faces of the men and women who demonstrate an unwavering commitment to the defense of our Nation.
12. Throughout my ministry in the Sea Services, I have seen firsthand the differences made in the lives of people: forty sailors baptized at the end of my first deployment, Haitian and Cuban refugees baptized by chaplains while I spoke the words of the baptismal rite during the refugee relocation program, a common faith cutting across ethnic and socio-cultural boundaries.
13. Lebanese-American author Kahlil Gibran in his poem, "Saint," captures the essence of what it means to participate in a vocation dedicated to making a difference in the lives of people:

THE SAINT

In my youth I once visited a saint in his silent grove beyond the hills; and as we were conversing upon the nature of virtue a brigand came limping wearily up the ridge. When he reached the grove he knelt down before the saint and said, "O saint, I would be comforted! My sins are heavy upon me."

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And the saint replied, "My sins, too, are heavy upon me."
And the brigand said, "But I am a thief and a plunderer."
And the saint replied, "I too am a thief and a plunderer."
And the brigand said, "But I am a murderer, and the blood of many men cries in my ears."
And the saint replied, "I am a murderer, and in my ears cries the blood of many men."
And the brigand said, "I have committed countless crimes."
And the saint replied, "I too have committed crimes without number."
Then the brigand stood up and gazed at the saint, and there was a strange look in his eyes.
And when he left us he went skipping down the hill.
And I turned to the saint and said, "Wherefore did you accuse yourself of uncommitted crimes? See you not this man went away no longer believing in you?"
And the saint answered, "It is true he no longer believes in me. But he went away much comforted."
At that moment we heard the brigand singing in the distance, and the echo of his song filled the valley with gladness.

14. Sometimes making a difference in the lives of people is placed within the context of profoundly tragic events: the crash, which claimed the lives of JFK, Jr., his wife and his wife's sister; the bombing of the USS Cole; the terrorist attacks of Nine Eleven; local citizens gunned down by the snipers, the explosion of the space shuttle, and the war with Iraq.
15. It is not uncommon for people suffering from tragedy to engage in soul searching in the midst of pain. Navy chaplains offered pastoral care in the aftermath of every one of these tragedies. Navy chaplains offered hope and consolation through casualty assistance, memorial ceremonies, and prayer services.
16. Behind the scenes, Religious Program Specialists were involved in planning the events and provided the necessary logistical support.
17. The relational memories span 27 years. How could I adequately describe my appreciation, mingled with awe, for my chaplain heroes: Thomas David Parham—the second black chaplain in the Navy and the first to be promoted to Captain on active duty;

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18. John Harold Craven—recipient of the Bronze Star, who served Marines through 4 campaigns in World War II and 3 campaigns in Korea;
19. John Joseph O'Connor—Chief of Chaplains from 1975-79 and later served as Archbishop of the Archdiocese of New York.
20. Through many more relationships, the Lord has blessed me, inspired me, and encouraged me: Chuck Greenwood, David White, J.C. Williams, Leroy Gilbert, Richard Dempsey, Carol Chambliss, Herman Kibble, Shamus O'Kielty, Bob Mole, Ed Condon, Marty Whitting, Julian Gnall.
21. Past and present members of my staff moved mountains with their faith, loyalty and professionalism: former Executive Assistant Mel Ferguson and current EA Al Keiran; former Deputy Executive Assistant Brad Abelson and current DEA Mark Steiner;
22. Division Directors—Al Hill, Lyman Smith, and Bill Lesak; Action Officers—Layne Boone, Charlotte Hunter, Dale White, and Mark Hendricks;
23. the enlisted personnel—Chief Howell, YN1 Krzmarzick, IT1 Oliphant, RP2 Gatlin, Seaman Whitehead; the Senior Enlisted Advisor Master Chief Person;
24. the civilians on the staff—Mrs. Berto, Ms. Hedgepeth, Ms. Harris, and Ms. Smith.
25. Time does not permit me to mention many more who have made a solid impact upon my life and the operation of the Chaplain Corps and Religious Program Specialist community. All of these relationships have been a blessing to me.
26. When I first began my sojourn with the Navy, I could not predict how the relationships I built in those first years of my Naval service would follow me and

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- continue to bless me as I assumed the role of Deputy Chief of Chaplains and Chief of Chaplains.
27. I thank God everyday for the extraordinary depth of faith and conviction I see in the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, and other leaders in the Armed Forces.
28. The familial memories would fill a thousand photo albums. I am indebted to my mother. My spiritual journey began when my mother saw a flyer announcing a church service. Little did my siblings and I know how that worship service she took us to would transform our lives. We began to attend church weekly without fail.
29. My allowance was contingent upon reciting Scripture verses to my mother.
30. My lovely wife, Brenda, following my mother's example, makes my allowance contingent upon the recitation of Scripture verses—you have no idea how serious I am. Brenda, you have been my soul mate and the mother of my children—the memories we have made and shared. God grant that we make many more.
31. I cannot look at my children without recalling the words of Psalm 127: Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. . . Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them."
32. It has been a great ride for me—a ride filled with memories; a ride filled with people; a ride filled with God. By God's grace, I hope to make many more memories. As my great ride in the Chaplain Corps comes to an end, I ask God's continued blessing upon the Chaplain Corps. The mantle of Chaplain Corps

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leadership will rest upon Chaplain Iasiello. Father Lou, may God's blessing rest upon you as the 23rd Chief of Chaplains of the United States Navy.

33. Thanks to all of you for joining me on a great ride. Most importantly, I thank my Lord, who was with me every mile and kept me safely on the road.